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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 002064

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2015

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: DUTCH THINKING ON ISAF III; FUTURE OF
DUTCH NAVY, JSF

Classified By: Ambassador Cl...

37388,7/27/2005 8:12,05THEHAGUE2064,"Embassy The
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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: DUTCH THINKING ON ISAF III; FUTURE OF
DUTCH NAVY, JSF

Classified By: Ambassador Clifford M. Sobel for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: Ambassador, DATT and ODC Chief met with Dutch
CHOD Gen. Dick Berlijn on July 19. Gen. Berlijn reviewed
Dutch thinking on participation in ISAF III, including a PRT
consisting initially of 1000 personnel (later to be expanded
to 1200) deployed most likely to Uruzgan province. Later
discussions on July 26 with the Acting Director of Operations
at the Dutch MFA confirmed this preliminary plan. The Dutch
will host the Canadians and British on August 17-18 to
follow-up on the force generation conference. Berlijn noted
that a compromise in Parliament prevented plans for an
1800-man deployment, as the main opposition party wanted
personnel available for a potential African mission. Berlijn
also talked about the possibility of U.S. support -- either
through proximity to Dutch forces or embedded U.S.
intelligence personnel -- as potentially helping convince
Dutch Minister of Defense Henk Kamp and others in the Dutch
government to deploy to Uruzgan.
2. (C) Cont. Summary: Gen. Berlijn reviewed changes occurring
in the Dutch Navy. Quoting Minister Kamp, Berlijn described
the Dutch Navy as "demoralized and adrift". Berlijn
explained that they need to become expeditionary, relying
less on their frigates and more on coastal patrol vessels and
landing platform ships to support land battles. He outlined
the possibility of selling six "M" frigates -- two to Belgium
and four to Chile -- proceeds from which could potentially
be used to purchase coastal patrol vessels, landing platform
dock ships, Tactical Tomahawk, helicopters, and other assets.
3. (C) Cont. Summary: Berlijn also stated that he was
interested in finding a way to prioritize the Joint Strike
Fighter (JSF) program within the Dutch government. He hoped
to develop a plan to pursue the purchase of an initial,
"acceptably safe" number of 50-60 JSFs in 2006, in order to
"depoliticize" the issue prior to the May 2007 elections. By
depoliticizing the issue through this initial purchase,
Berlijn suggested that the Dutch could keep options open
regarding the total eventual purchase of 80 or more JSFs.
End Summary.

ISAF Stage III

4. (C) Gen. Berlijn initially briefed on Dutch plans to
participate in ISAF Stage III. These plans are still by and
large under discussion within the Dutch government; Dutch FM
Bot has been negotiating with Parliament over ISAF III for
several weeks. MajGen Cobelens, MOD Director of Operations,
drafted the preliminary plan presented to NATO during the
July 25 force generation conference. According to the Acting
Director of Operations at the Dutch MFA on July 26, this
preliminary plan calls for Dutch partnership with the
Canadians and Brits at the Forward Support Base (FSB) in
Kandahar beginning in April 2006. The deployment will last
for eighteen months; command responsibility for the FSB will
be on a six-month rotation with the Canadians taking the
first watch. The Dutch will assume command of the FSB in
November 2006.
5. (C) According to the Acting Director of Operations at the
Dutch MFA, the preliminary Dutch plan proposed a Dutch
Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan province.
The Dutch plan to initially deploy 1000 personnel, ramping up
to 1200 personnel by the time they assume charge of the
Kandahar FSB in November 2006. The 1200-person deployment
will also include approximately 4 Chinooks, 4-6 Apaches, and
the 4 F-16s currently stationed in Kabul. The Dutch MOD will
host Canada and the UK on August 17-18 to follow-up on ISAF
Stage III proposal details. (Note: A read-out from USNATO
suggests that the United States may be invited to attend the
meeting as well; according to the Dutch MFA, only the Brits
and Canadians have thus far been invited. Post will seek
more information on possible U.S. attendance. End note.)
6. (C) Gen. Berlijn explained that he was limited to a PRT

consisting of 1000 personnel due to restrictions set by Parliament. Berlijn initially wanted 1800 personnel, but the Labor Party (PvdA) demanded that some personnel also be available for possible operations in Africa (NFI). A compromise within Parliament led to the 1000-person restriction to accommodate the Labor Party. (Note: Dutch governments prefer to make military deployment decisions backed by a parliamentary super-majority, usually to include the main opposition party. End note.) While the number of personnel in the PRT will eventually increase to 1200, the Acting Director of Operations at the Dutch MFA explained that this number is a "maximum" number set by Parliament that cannot be exceeded, and will also include air technicians and support for their deployed helicopters and F-16s. Actually, the Dutch initial plan calls for a fully operational PRT of 1568 men; due to the 1200 restriction set by Parliament, the Dutch were actively encouraging the Australians to partner with them in the PRT.

17. (C) According to Berlijn, the Dutch had not yet agreed internally (as of July 19) on the location of the PRT. While the Dutch preliminary plan proposed during the force generation conference calls for a PRT deployment in Uruzgan, the subject is still open for debate. Berlijn and other members of the military staff were strongly recommending that the Dutch troops be deployed to Uruzgan province in central Afghanistan, where they could, in his view, make a real difference in a challenging environment. Others in the government, however, wanted the Dutch to deploy to the safer province of Nimruz near the Iranian border. Berlijn discussed the possibility of U.S. support -- either through proximity to Dutch forces or embedding U.S. intelligence within Dutch forces -- as potentially helping convince his minister and others in the Dutch government that they can and should deploy to Uruzgan.

----- Future of Dutch Navy

18. (C) Following a question on the status of potential Tactical Tomahawk acquisition, Gen. Berlijn provided an extended background explanation on changes occurring in the Dutch Navy. According to Berlijn, Dutch Minister of Defense Kamp recently described the Dutch Navy as "demoralized and adrift". Kamp felt that the Navy relied too heavily upon their frigates. The Navy needed to reorient and "focus on tasks", becoming "expeditionary and more coastal".

19. (C) After studying the issue, Berlijn stated that the Dutch need to sell some of their frigates and buy more coastal patrol vessels (CPVs) and landing platform dock (LPD) ships. Berlijn cautioned that convincing Dutch admirals to sell their frigates would be very difficult -- "Getting the Admirals to give up their frigates is like getting a fighter pilot to give up his fighter" (Note: Berlijn is a fighter pilot.). Berlijn stated that he wants the Navy to support land battle and theater ballistic missile defense (TBMD). He expressed firm support for a Dutch submarine capability, noting that "the Dutch are in the submarine business". In that respect, he needed to put an end to the current debate on submarines within the Dutch government. Berlijn also noted that they are looking at a study to improve its oiler ship, including its capacity to incorporate more helicopters in order to support Dutch troops in the field or for use during amphibious deployments.

110. (C) Berlijn then discussed the possibility of selling six "M" frigates, which he described as "very sensitive" as the Dutch are in competition with the Brits in this regard. He stated that the Belgians are interested in purchasing two frigates; the Chileans have expressed interest in buying the other four. (Note: In a conversation with Dutch FM Bot on July 21, Bot told ambassador that he was not in favor of selling the frigates, but would not/not disagree with Kamp in Cabinet. Bot noted, however, that there was resistance in the Dutch Navy regarding the sale of the frigates. End note.) Berlijn further explained that if the Dutch sold these frigates, proceeds could potentially be used to purchase coastal patrol vessels, landing platform dock ships, Tactical Tomahawk, helicopters, and other assets.

----- Joint Strike Fighter

111. (C) Berlijn then turned discussion to the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), and noted that he was looking for ways to prioritize JSF in the Dutch government. He wished to "depoliticize" the issue prior to the May 2007 elections by working to get a commitment from the Dutch government in 2006 for the purchase of an initial, "acceptably safe" number of 50-60 JSFs. By depoliticizing the issue with this initial purchase, he suggested that options remained open to eventually buy over 80 JSFs in total. He commented that "even the leftists agree that this is the best fighter we could acquire". Berlijn acknowledged that if the Dutch want to keep their aerospace industry alive, they must be actively involved with both JSF and the Airbus 380.

----- Tactical Tomahawks; UAV Project

112. (C) Berlijn noted that the Dutch are still committed to

the acquisition of Tactical Tomahawks, but it needed to occur sequentially following the development and construction of coastal patrol vessels. (Note: Selling the six "M" frigates and replacing them with newly-built corvettes -- thus providing work for the Dutch ship-building industry -- may yield sufficient parliamentary support for acquisition of Tactical Tomahawk, which could be employed on the Dutch Navy's new Aegis-equivalent LCF frigates. End note.)

Berlijn briefly addressed the Dutch unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) project in partnership with the French. According to Berlijn, the partnership helps diffuse tensions within the Dutch government regarding the perception that the Dutch only buy military equipment from the United States. Berlijn explained, however, that the program has stalled as the French have taken a "90 degree turn". The French Defense Minister is scheduled to visit the Netherlands in September; the UAV project will be on the agenda for discussion.

SOBEL